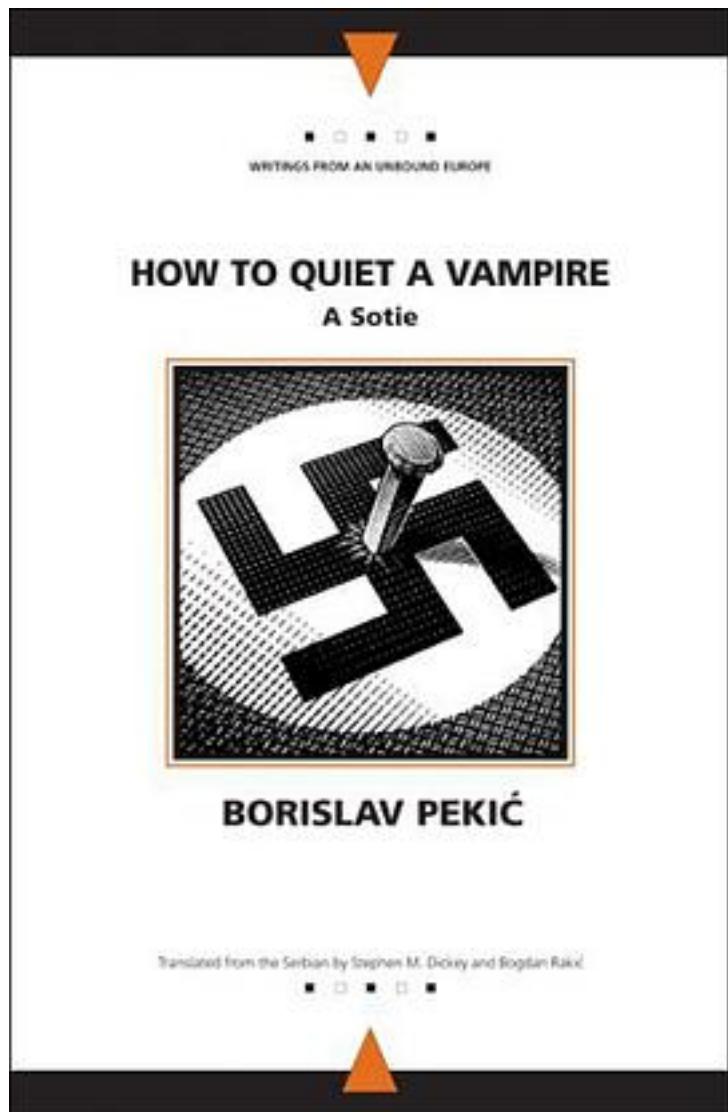


How to Quiet a Vampire



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Published to acclaim in 1977, this controversial novel of ideas follows Konrad Rutkowski -- professor of medieval history and former Gestapo officer -- as he returns to the scene of his war crimes determined to renounce, or perhaps justify, his Nazi past. In a series of letters to a brother-in-law, Rutkowski lays out his ambivalent reactions to war and unthinkable violence, connecting his own swirling ideas to those of some of the major figures of European thought: Plato, St. Augustine, Descartes, Nietzsche, Freud, and others. But the novel is more than an intellectual meditation. Pekic was himself a frequent political agitator and occasional prisoner, and he drew on his first hand knowledge of police methods and life under totalitarianism to paint a chilling portrait of an intellectual acting as a tool of repression. At the same time he questions whether Rutkowski's ideology puts him outside the philosophical tradition he so admires -- or if the line separating it from totalitarianism is not as clear as we like to think.

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